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The Community  
of  
**Z E L M A**

1904 - 1949

Zelma Homemakers Club

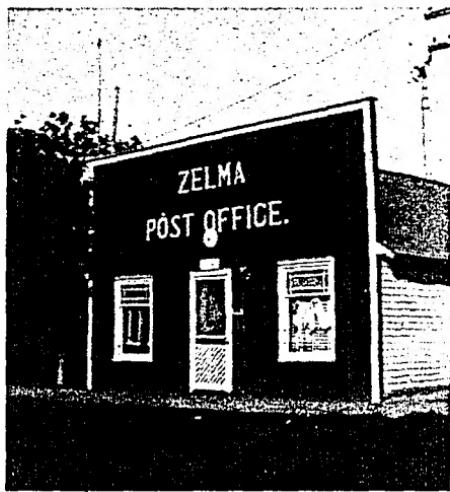
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ZEELINA, ONT - HISTORY

Zeelina Home-makers Club.

The Community of Zeelina,  
1904 - 1949.

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## FOREWORD

The village of Zelma is located about 45 miles southeast of Saskatoon, on the main C.N.R. line between Saskatoon and Winnipeg. The nearest towns are Allan, nine miles west, and Young, eight miles east. Watrous is about 25 miles to the east. The land around the village is flat and treeless, and of very good quality. The majority of the farmers raise grain only, although a few go in for mixed farming. About 11 miles to the north, the C.P.R. line runs through Colonsay and Viscount. Ten miles south, the flat prairie gradually develops into "the Hills", a section of small but sometimes sharp hills stretching in a strip about 20 miles wide from Dundurn east almost to Stalwart and Liberty. No railway has ever been built through this section, so the closest towns south of Zelma are Kenaston and Davidson, about 40 miles distant on the C.N.R. line between Saskatoon and Regina.

The publication of this story of the village of Zelma and surrounding district has been sponsored by the Zelma Homemakers Club, with the committee in charge composed of Mrs. John Drobot and Mrs. A. B. Joseph. The account was compiled by Mrs. Joseph from the reports of early residents and any available records. It is impossible to avoid some inaccuracies and omissions in an account such as this, and we hope our readers will be lenient in their criticism.

The committee wishes to express its gratitude to the following for their contributions: Albert Andrew, Percy Browne, V. P. Byam, Mrs. T. Campbell, C. W. Cline, G. R. Duff, T. C. Johns, Mrs. A. W. Joseph, A. A. Mellish, A. D. Murray, Gordon Smith, Charles Teneycke, Oscar Wingrove, and M. D. Worden. Helpful information was received, too, from the Departments of Education and Municipal Affairs in Regina. Records consulted included those of the Zelma Telephone Co., Zelma Curling Club, Zelma School District, and the Church.

Pictures were donated by Albert Andrew, Percy Browne, V. P. Byam, Mrs. T. Campbell, Mrs. F. Imholz, Mrs. T. C. Johns, A. D. Murray, and Mrs. R. Scott.

In 1904, when our story of Zelma begins, the railway line from Winnipeg to Saskatoon through Watrous had not been built, and the area in which the village was to develop was 30 miles from the nearest railway, the line from Regina to Saskatoon through Davidson, Hanley, and Dundurn.

## EARLY SETTLERS

One spring day in 1904, two young brothers stepped down from the train at Dundurn. They were nearing the end of a long journey across an ocean and half a continent in search of a new home. They were only two of the many settlers arriving in Dundurn in that year, but for us they have a special significance. These boys from England, Gordon and Harold Smith, were the first to settle in the area which was to become the Zelma district. They can also claim the distinction of being the first settlers in the present Morris Municipality.

The boys hunted up a livery barn in Dundurn and hired a team to take them and their supplies to their homestead 30 miles east. We can imagine with what mixed emotions of excitement and apprehension they started on that last lap of their long journey. There were no real roads for them to follow. At first the way was marked with the shacks of settlers, and they stopped at different homes for their meals. Gradually the shacks thinned out, and finally they were travelling in the unsettled area south and east of the present village of Allam. They began to check the markers left by the surveyors and at last they found the right one—Sec. 30-33-28 W 2nd Mer. They pitched the tent which was to be their home until they could haul lumber from Dundurn for building, and looked around them.

The flat and almost treeless land stretched to the horizon with no sign of human habitation. To the south was the blue haze of the hills. The prairie grass was knee-deep in places, and the land was dotted with blue sloughs and small clumps of willow and poplar. In that spring of 1904, wild game was plentiful. Occasional herds of deer or antelope and flocks of wild turkey might be seen. The sloughs were filled with ducks and muskrat houses. There was more water around then, and old timers claim that the mosquitoes were more numerous and larger.

Mr. Albert Andrew, who arrived in the district in March, 1906, describes some of the things he noticed on his first trip across the prairie from Dundurn: "There were no roads—just trails winding over the hills, twisting and turning to find the easiest way. There were many narrow trails crossing and recrossing each other in all directions, made by vast herds of buffalo travelling single file from one place to another. Buffalo wallows could be seen, too—places where the buffalo lay down and rolled on the ground to rid themselves of mosquitoes and flies. There were still skeletons of buffalo to be found at the edge of almost every slough, although buffalo had disappeared from this area 20 to 30 years before the first settlers arrived."

Gordon and Harold Smith were the first settlers to arrive in the district (1904), and they had things pretty much to themselves for their first year. Their homestead was five miles west of the present village of Zelma. Through the years from 1904 to 1907, other settlers gradually moved in, and the area became dotted with homes. The settlers came in from the nearest railway points—Dundurn (30 miles), Hanley (45 miles), and Humboldt (60 miles). The majority came from the British Isles, Eastern Canada, and U.S.A., but we are proud, too, of those who came from Continental Europe, and grateful for their help in building up our district. It is impossible to mention all the early settlers by name, but on a later page you will find a list of all those who had settled in the district by 1907.

Early settlers included George Peek and Charles Weston, who located their land in 1904, and began farming operations the next year. 1905 also brought in Frank Imholtz, Jim and George Nicholson, Howard Andrew, and Walter Hines.

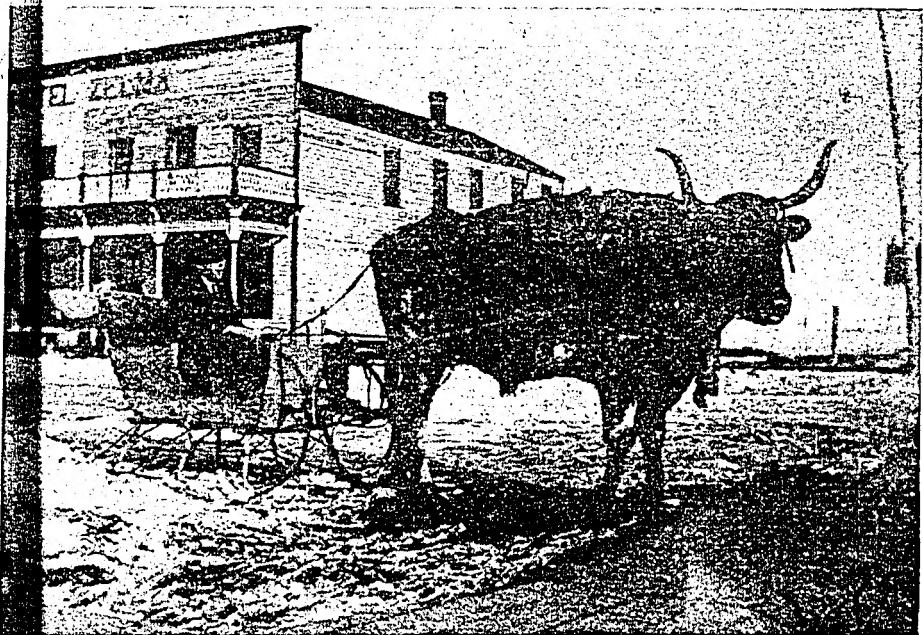
By 1906, the group had widened out to include Henry Campbell and



The first elevator, built by Atlas Grain Co., today belonging to National  
Grain Co. The men present are C. G. Henriksen, Johnny Kruger,  
Nick Coulson, Bert Gilling and Billy Chambers. Note oxen  
and horses harnessed together.

family, A. W. Hurst-Boram, Albert Andrew, Billy and George Todd, Charlie Dodd, A. F. Coleman, Oscar Wingrove John MacBride, John MacPherson, Edward Cochrane, Horace and Henry Dennison, Otto Fraleigh, T. C. Johns, Bert Gilling, Billy Chambers, Billy Walsh, and M. D. Worden. North of the present village, homesteaders included Mr. and Mrs. A. R. Rhodes, the S. K. Temple family, A. A. Fraser, Claus Holtorf and C. Koopman. Among new settlers in 1907 were Carl Henriksen, Roy Smith, Will Worden, Albert and Arthur Todd, Bill Bailey, Percy and Cecil Browne, and the Stanfords. A. A. Fraser moved to Allan in 1910 where he started the "Allan Tribune", the first weekly news paper in the district.

The territory to the south was becoming settled as well. In 1905, William Teneycke and A. W. Joseph filed on homesteads  $7\frac{1}{2}$  and 10 miles south of the present village, and in 1906 A. W. Joseph moved in with his family, along with Lew Joseph and family, the Harry Clarks, and George Campbell. 1907 brought Alec Findlay, H. Jones and family, J. Benson, T. Sletton, Welders, Denises, Schwartzenbergers, and John Rathje. These settlers to the south used



**Homesteaders' mode of travel. Owned by E. Halfhide. (1912)**

Hanley as their town, while those further north went to Dundurn.

A history of Zelma would hardly be complete without mention of one pioneer family—the Clines. John Cline arrived first and took up a homestead north of town in 1906. He was followed by his brothers, Arthur, Charles, and Allan, and in 1910, his father moved in with the rest of the family to settle south of the village. Seven of the sons, John, Arthur, Charles, Allan, Harvey, Fred and Dick, remained in the district, along with two of the daughters, Mrs. Albert Todd and Mrs. Earl McDonald. Mr. Cline, Sr., was an outstanding member of the community, and his children and their families have followed his example in taking an active part in all local enterprises.

Local authorities disagree on what woman was first to arrive in the district, but most favor Mrs. John MacPherson as first in the area immediately around Zelma. Other early comers include Ellen Nicholson (later Mrs. Howard Andrew), Mrs. A. R. Rhodes, and Mrs. Claus Bacchus. Mrs. Bert Gilling, who arrived with her husband in the fall of 1906, has the honor of being the first bride to come into the district. One amusing incident that illustrates the scarcity of women in those early days took place on a Sunday afternoon in April, 1906, when a group of bachelors had gathered at Frank Imholtz' home to wait for the mail to be brought in from Dundurn. Dennis Prust, who was looking out the doorway, suddenly exclaimed: "Frank, give me your gun! There's an antelope over there on the hill." Frank told him to take the telescope and make sure before shooting. Dennis stared through the telescope for a moment, and then shouted: "My Gawd, it's a woman!" There was great excitement for a time as the men hurried around, washing, shaving, and generally making themselves presentable for this important occasion. The woman turned out to be Mrs. John MacPherson.

A. W. Joseph, who had moved into his homestead to the south in 1906, started a horse ranch there, believing that the hills were suitable only for pastureland. His ranch was the first home travellers would reach on a trip north from Hanley, and it became a recognized stopping place for settlers moving into the Manitou district via Hanley. Mrs. Joseph reserved two beds for these wayfarers, but in bad weather, there were often eight or 10 "guests" waiting there for the weather to clear. The homes of Oscar Wingrove and Gordon Smith further north served as similar stopping places for travellers to and from Dundurn.

Some of the other early settlers deserve special mention. Mr. A. R. Rhodes is noted for his work in fruit grafting. He developed a strain of hardy plum tree now widely grown in prairie orchards. He is very clever, too, at weaving articles and ornaments from straw, one of the few people in Canada accomplished in this line. Some of his straw work is on display at the University of Saskatchewan. He is also a talented painter, and he and his wife proved that it is possible to have a beautiful flower garden on the prairies. Mr. Rhodes was presented to the King and Queen during the Royal Visit of 1939, and the flowers the Queen received at Watrous were in a basket woven from straw by Mr. Rhodes.

Few may remember that C. A. Meilicke was once a Zelma pioneer and lived on the present Rathje brothers' farm. While there in the years before 1910, he invented an adding machine which was patented and has been widely used in large business houses. Later he moved to Saskatoon, and then to Chicago where he started a business machine manufacturing company.

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## RESIDENTS OF ZELMA DISTRICT PRIOR TO 1907

Taken From the Program of a Banquet Held by Zelma District Old Timers  
February 28, 1927.

G. Allingham, Albert Andrew, Howard Andrew, Claus Bacchus, William Bailey, George Bates, T. Bennett, J. Bennett, Mr. and Mrs. Jay Benson, Charles Bishop, William Bishop, Mr. and Mrs. John Brossart, and John, Percy, Browne, Cecil Browne, George Campbell, Thomas Campbell, William Chambers, Jim Cline, A. F. Coleman, Mr. and Mrs. Dennison, Horace, Vivian and Linda Clarence Dewey, Charles Dodd, Dr. and Mrs. Edgar, Clifton and Wilber, Otto Fraleigh, Mr. and Mrs. A. A. Fraser, and Ferne, A. Findlay, A. Fischer, E. Fischer, Mr. and Mrs. B. Gilling, E. Halfhide, H. Halfhide, Henry Hass, Mrs. G. Hass, John Heisler, Mr. and Mrs. C. G. Henriksen, Mr. and Mrs. W. Helmkae, Russell and Grace, W. E. Hines, William Hintz, Mr. and Mrs. C. Holtom and Henry, C. Hughes, F. Hughes, R. Hughes, A. W. Hurst-Boram, F. Imholz, J. Jamieson, Mr. and Mrs. T. C. Johns, Thomas and Gladys, Mr. and Mrs. H. Jones, Thomas and May, Mr. and Mrs. A. W. Joseph, Gladys and Vera, Mr. and Mrs. Lew Joseph, May, Rosie, Nancy, Theo Klein, J. Kroeger, E. M. Lenard, Herman Libke, Joseph Leier, R. McAskill, John MacBride, E. E. McDonald, W. Mackenzie, John McPherson, Mr. and Mrs. A. Martha Farmer and N. Mr. and Mrs. Midgeley, Georgina and Edwin, Mary Moldenhauer, T. Nicholson, George Peek, Dennis Prust, Mr. and Mrs. A. R. Rhodes and Leslie, Mrs. F. Roberts, Chris Schaan, John Schaan, Mrs. Schaan, A. Schwartzenberger, P. Schwartzenberger, T. Schwartzenberger, V. Schwartzenberger, T. Sletton, Gordon and Harold Smith, M. Smith, Roy Smith, H. Stamford, H. Steinberg, Mrs. S. K. Temple and Cliff, Mrs. R. Temple, C. Teneycke, W. Teneycke, F. Tisdale, A. Todd, G. Todd, W. Todd, Mr. and Mrs. D. Trautman, Joseph and James, J. Usselman and Martin, M. Usselman, W. Walsh, C. Welder, J. Welder, N. Welder, Al Weninger and Frank, C. Weston, Dr. and Mrs. Wilhelm Joseph and Frank, Mr. and Mrs. O. Wingrove and Beatrice, M. D. Worden.



Zelma about 1912

## PIONEER PROBLEMS

### Living Quarters, Food and Fuel

The land in the Zelma area was surveyed in the 1890's, and the corners of sections of land on the road allowance were marked by iron stakes into which numbers had been cut with a chisel to identify the quarter. The stakes were driven into mounds of earth called corner mounds. A homesteader filed on his land in Regina (later in Humboldt) when he reached the district, he had to hunt up the correct marker to identify his land. The markers were often difficult to find; some were obscured by the tall grass, and sometimes the corner came in the middle of a slough. Often new settlers hunted several days before finding the markers. One settler located the first marker, but after days of searching, could find no sign of a second. Finally he gave up and struck out a furrow in the direction he judged was due north. Years later he discovered it was northeast, and he was farming the road allowance and part of another man's land.

The first problem faced by the settler once he had located his homestead was that of a place to live. Lumber for building had to be hauled 30 miles from Dundurn or Hanley, and many of the settlers lived in tents until more permanent homes could be constructed. Some built houses of sods, while others burrowed into the side of a hill and then built a front and roof of sods. These sod makeshifts had the advantage of being warmer in cold weather than the frame houses, but the building involved much hard labor, and in wet weather the sod roofs became so saturated with moisture that they dripped for a day or so after the rains ceased.

T. C. Johns tells an amusing story about one of these sod houses. Until he could build a house, Shorty (Earl) McDonald made himself a dugout in the side of a hill and covered the roof with poles and sods. He had barely enough stove pipe to reach the surface, and when he had a fire on, the smoke seemed to be coming right out of the ground. One Sunday, Shorty invited Bill Hintz over for dinner, giving him the number of the quarter on which he lived to enable him to find the place. After hours of searching, Bill came to a spot where smoke was rising from the ground. He had heard in his youth of the fellow with horns and a tail who lived in a hole in the ground, and he was sure he had stumbled right onto His home. All his sins rushed to his mind and, fearing the worst, he turned and fled. However, Shorty's dog had announced Bill's arrival, and Shorty hurried out of the hut. After much talking, he was able to convince Bill that everything was all right, and coax him inside for dinner.

The early settlers suffered many other inconveniences, often real hardship. All provisions had to be hauled at least 30 miles over trails, some sections of which were almost impassable at all times—an alkali strip 15 miles east of Dundurn and a similar section northeast of the present village always gave them trouble. There were few horses in the district; the majority used oxen. They had the advantage of being cheap to buy, but they were painfully slow.

Such a trip for supplies could be attempted only a few times a year, and this made food a constant problem. Most of the early settlers were bachelors with little previous experience at cooking, and, although they claim they became quite proficient in the culinary art (especially at making flapjacks), Albert Andrew admits they would probably have died of indigestion if the women had not arrived. Their main diet consisted of salt pork, potatoes, flapjacks, and porridge. They made their own bread, and Frank Imholtz acquired quite a reputation as a baker. They had no fresh meat except wild game—antelope or ducks. The bachelors were unable to keep cows or chickens because they so often had to be absent two or three days at a time on their trips for supplies; therefore they had no eggs, milk, cream or butter. Their bread was eaten plain, or with lard or syrup. A married settler was more fortunate—he could leave his wife at home to do the chores, and, although the bachelors could see this advantage of having a wife, many of them could not afford to get married until they were established.

Fuel presented another problem. Coal had to be hauled from Dundurn or Hanley and it was expensive; the majority hauled wood from the bush west of Dundurn or north of Manitou Lake. They tried to make enough trips in good weather to lay up a supply for winter, but this was not always possible; then the two-day trip had to be made in winter, breaking trail through the snow. Howard Andrew describes the first trip he and Frank Imholtz made to the Manitou Bush in 1905; they spent the night by the lake with a fire burning to keep away wolves, wildcats, and lynx. In the morning when they led the horses to the lake to drink the horses refused to touch the water; the men tasted it and discovered this was mineral water. There were no houses on the route to the lake when the first Zelma settlers made the trip; after 1906, they went by way of Hurst-Boram's farm five miles southeast of Zelma, and gradually other settlers' homes dotted the trail.

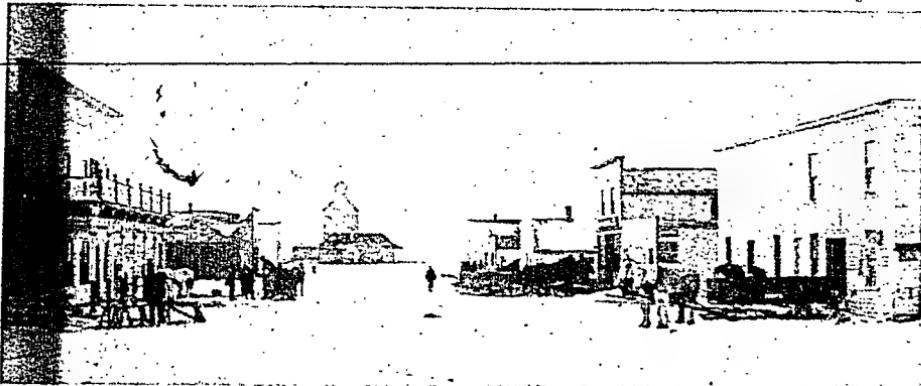
Once they were harvesting enough grain, some settlers tried burning straw as fuel, and had stoves and fireplaces especially constructed for this purpose. It was not altogether satisfactory because of the quantity required.

## OTHER PROBLEMS AND HARDSHIPS

The pioneers also had their agricultural worries. They were required to break 10 acres a year the first three years to prove up on their homestead claims, and though this seems small to us today, the settlers were handicapped by lack of power and machinery. Many of them, too, had never been on a farm before. They were also required to live on their land six months of each year.

The majority used oxen as their source of power—they were cheap but very slow and very independent animals. Some worked oxen and horses together. When the settlers could afford to buy horses, the majority were supplied by A. W. Joseph, from his horse ranch.

Oxen were not the easiest animals to train, and there are many stories told of their insistence on putting their own desires ahead of obeying orders. When oxen wanted a drink, they went to the nearest place to get it, even if it meant hauling a load of grain or supplies into a slough. T. C. Johns tells



Winter view of Zelma before the 1930 fire

about Walter Hines' first introduction to oxen. Walter, who had come out from England to Brandon, Man., was a wonderful penman and a first class accountant; but he knew little of oxen. When he decided to go homesteading, he packed all his belongings in boxes, labelled them neatly: "Groceries—Keep Dry", "Bedding—Keep Dry", "Clothing—Keep Dry", and shipped them to Dundurn. There he bought a yoke of oxen, loaded his belongings onto a wagon, and started for his homestead. While crossing the grade over the Blackstrap, the oxen decided they were thirsty. In spite of all Walter could do, over the grade they went into the water, and there were Walter's boxes, bobbing around in the slough, disregarding all his orders to "Keep Dry".

The homesteader first had to clear his land of brush and stones. The first breaking was done with wooden handled walking plows—a slow, tedious process. If a settler succeeded in breaking the required 10 acres the first year, he could seed it the second year, thus waiting two years for his first small crop. His second and third crops would not be much larger, and the price of wheat was low in those days.

Gordon Smith and his brother broke 35 acres in 1904 with a hand plow using two horses and two oxen. They sowed it to wheat in the spring of 1905—the first wheat grown in the Zelma district. A Mr. Humphreys from Dundurn brought a threshing outfit through the present Allan and Bradwell districts in the fall, and finally reached the Smiths in December, but due to bad weather, the grain could not be threshed until January, 1906. The grain, averaging 36 bushels to the acre, then had to be hauled to Dundurn for sale.

After the first few years, the walking plow gave way to the sulky plow, a riding plow with a 16-inch share. The work of breaking the land went much more quickly from then on.

Winter always meant a time of great hardship for the pioneers. The single board shacks many of them constructed were hard to heat, especially with only green wood to burn. Albert Andrew tells about sitting down to write a letter and having to throw out the ink first. Those who lived in sod shacks were able to keep warmer.

Although the settlers tried to get in enough supplies and fuel in the fall to last the winter, sometimes they had no choice but to make the 30-mile trip in bitter weather over the trackless prairie. There are many stories that could be told of men lost in blizzards, reaching safety by chance only. It was the custom then for each homesteader to leave a lamp burning in the window all

night to guide anyone lost on the prairie to a home. On winter trips, the men usually walked behind the sleigh, to keep warmer and to make it easier for the horses. There were no signposts, fences, or telephone poles to guide travellers, and they often relied completely on their horses' sense of direction.

Albert Andrew describes a trip he and his brother, Howard, made to the Maniou bush in November or December, 1907. All the settlers planned that year to go for wood about the same time in order to have a good trail. Henry Campbell and his boys went first and marked the way with willow branches. The Andrew brothers started out after a fresh snowfall, and the countryside was completely white as far as they could see. When they reached the bush, their eyes were smarting badly, and by the time they had cut and loaded the wood, they were both snowblind. To add to their troubles, a blizzard came up, as they started for home. They managed to reach the Mattenly home, where they stayed for two days while the blizzard raged. When the weather cleared, they had more or less recovered their eyesight, so they started out again, only to be caught in another storm worse than the first. They left the horses to follow the trail on their own while they walked behind the second sleigh, hoping and praying that the horses could lead them to safety. They plodded along for many miles, the horses taking them up and down hills but never once losing the trail. Finally the horses stopped. The men looked around through the whirling snow and discovered they were in a farmyard—the Coleman place, about four miles east of Zelma. When they got home after the storm had let up, they found their sod barn snowed under, and they had to dig a trench four or five feet deep to get the horses to the doorway.

On another winter trip from Dundurn, the Andrew brothers were again caught in a blizzard. It was dark when they reached Bill Roper's shack, only to find no one at home. They broke in, lit a lamp, and had started to get supper when they heard someone swearing outside. In walked Bill Roper. He had been caught in the storm on the prairie and lost his sense of direction. Suddenly in his wandering, he saw a light and headed towards it, not realizing until he reached the door that the light was coming from his own shack—one instance where an owner was grateful to housebreakers.

One night A. W. Joseph was caught in a blizzard while riding across the prairie on horseback. He let the horse choose the way and they went on for an endless time through the raging storm. Mr. Joseph was becoming numb with the cold and was about to tie himself to the saddle when the horse stopped and refused to go any further. Mr. Joseph finally dismounted to discover that he was at his own barn door.

On a Saturday during the winter of 1906-1907, Percy Browne set out to walk from a farm near the present Elstow to his homestead north of Zelma, a distance of about 16 miles. The white prairie showed no sign of a trail, and soon Mr. Browne realized he was lost. He kept walking until, when he was near exhaustion, he saw a sod shack in the distance. He managed to reach it but collapsed on the step. When he regained consciousness, 2½ hours later, he found he was at the S. K. Temple home.

Old timers still talk about that bad winter of 1906-1907. The snow and cold came early in the fall; wells were dry, and the men had to cut through three feet of ice on Billy Chambers' slough to reach water for the horses. During the winter, A. W. Joseph had to cut steps down through five or six feet of ice to reach water in the big slough east of his farm. It is said that there was the heaviest snowfall the West has ever had during that winter, but there are no records to confirm this. The ground was still frozen in the middle of May, 1907; Albert Andrew describes cutting the drifts on the summerfallow with a disc to make them melt more quickly, and on May 7, Percy Browne went to Elstow by sleigh to get lumber to build his house. Most of the seedin

was done in June that year, and the frost came early in the fall of 1907, so there was little crop in the district.

Prairie fires in summer were a constant source of danger to early settlers. The prairie grass was thick and knee-deep, and there was little broken land to stop the sweep of the fires. Many settlers lost their crops, all pasture and feed for stock, and sometimes their homes and equipment. One of the first things a new settler had to do was to plow a fire guard around his buildings.

Gordon Smith describes one occasion when he and his brother were on a trip to Manitou Lake. They could see a prairie fire to the south, but the wind was carrying the fire away from them so they took no precautions. Suddenly the wind changed, bringing the fire towards them at a terrific speed. They quickly burned off a strip of prairie and drew the horses and wagon onto it for safety. When the fire passed around them, the roar of the flames frightened the horses, but they managed to hold them. The heat was so great it blistered the paint on the wagon.

Albert Andrew gives a very vivid picture of a prairie fire in the fall of 1906. He says: "About 1 p.m., I saw smoke rising in the West, and we began to prepare. We had already ploughed a fire guard around the buildings. We hauled barrels of water to the inside corners of the guard and gathered up sacks to soak in the water ready to beat out any sparks that might jump the guard. About 4 p.m. the fire reached the crest of the hill a mile west of us. It had been split up by numerous sloughs into six separate columns. These columns widened out and soon the fire presented an unbroken front across the prairie. In the distance the fire had seemed to be a golden thread along the horizon; now it was a sheet of flame four to five feet high, pushed on at a terrific speed by the wind. Sparks and burning embers were whirling in every direction; some of them were hurled ahead of the fire where they started up countless little fires. Hundreds of forked tongues of fire shot up high above the main flame, and the great roar of the flames drowned out even the sound of the high wind. As the wall of flames rushed nearer, we took up our positions, a wet sack in each hand. The fire struck the guard. That part died, and the rest rushed by on both sides to continue its mad sweep over the prairie. After the fire had passed, we looked out over a scene of desolation. The whole prairie was blackened with hardly a blade of grass left."

We have mentioned some of the physical hardships experienced by the earliest settlers in the Zelma area, but perhaps the most difficult thing for most of them to endure was the loneliness of life on the prairie, especially in the winter time. Many of the pioneers had come from large cities, and they would find the forced isolation very depressing. The early women settlers must have been particularly lonely at times; their husbands were often away on long trips for supplies, and the nearest woman neighbor might be many miles away. Sometimes two friends chose homesteads near each other and batched together for the first few years. Many bachelors left their farms in the winter months and went to the cities to work, partly to avoid the long winter alone, partly to make enough money to continue farming the next year.

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## PIONEER PLEASURES

Life was not all work and worry for the pioneer—they had their pleasant times, too. Visiting back and forth was their main form of entertainment; some had musical instruments, and they enjoyed many musical evenings. Occasionally there were unexpected visitors from further away—travellers who were passing through or men who had lost their way. These callers often depleted already meagre food supplies, but no one was ever turned away. The

West acquired its reputation for friendliness and hospitality in those early days, and it is to be hoped this spirit is never lost.

Trips to Dundurn and Hanley in good weather were a break in the monotony of farm life. The settlers stopped at various homes en route for their meals (usually Bert Derman's or Bill Russell's) and stayed overnight at the hotel or wherever they could find accommodation—often this turned out to be in the loft of the livery barn. Summer trips to Manitou Lake for wood combined business with pleasure too. Once the wood was loaded, the men would go for a swim in the lake, and perhaps shoot ducks and cook them over a campfire for their supper.



The first automobile in Zelma - owned by V. P. Eyam, 1914

## THE FIRST BUSINESS PLACES

Getting the mail was a big event in those days, as you can imagine. The first settlers got their mail at Dundurn, but soon a Post Office called Curson was opened on George Forester's farm a mile or so south of the present village of Allan, with a Mr. Randall as postmaster. The mail was brought to Curson once a week from Dundurn. The settlers sometimes called for their own mail there, but more often one man (Horace Dennison or one of Henry Campbell's sons) picked up all the mail for the Zelma district and brought it to the Campbell farm (now August Wilderman's) or to Frank Imholtz' farm. Later a second Post Office was opened on J. Jamieson's place one mile north of Zelma. It was called "Camholtz", formed from the names of Henry Campbell and Frank Imholtz.

Gradually the area acquired a few stores. The earliest one operated by Wald and Diebert, was near Allan, and in the Zelma district John MacBain started a store on his homestead, not to make money but as a convenience to his neighbors (1906). He had a few shelves against one wall of his house and sold groceries, flour, rolled oats, prunes, syrup, soda biscuits and beans. In 1911 Jamieson opened a store half a mile west of Zelma, on the land recently farmed by George Peek.

The district was more fortunate in the way of medical service in those days than it is now. Early settlers included Dr. Edgar, a medical doctor, and Dr. Wilhelm, a veterinarian who was also first J.P. for the district. Mrs. Edgar and Mrs. Cochrane were both qualified nurses.

The building of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway from Winnipeg to Saskatoon marked the end of pioneer days in the Zelma district. The long trips for supplies and fuel were over, more settlers moved in, and soon the village of Zelma came into being.

## THE BUILDING OF THE RAILWAY

The Grand Trunk Pacific made three surveys through the area in 1905—the present line, one about 10 miles south, and one further north. The centre one was selected as most feasible. The grading was started in 1907 with crews from the west working out of Saskatoon, and from the east out of Humboldt. The sub-contractors for the Zelma district were Farrell and Turnbull. The big fill or grade through the slough past Jack Tate's farm (later Charlie Weston's) took tons of dirt and a great deal of work. A big railway camp was set up nearby. The grading was completed in 1908, and for the summer the farmers used the grade as a highway. The steel was laid in the fall of 1908. The steel-laying outfit consisted of a big machine followed by a flat car, both pushed by a locomotive. The men worked in three groups. One gang laid ties; the machine then pushed out two rails over the ties, and a second gang anchored them in place with a few spikes. The machine moved on, and a third gang completed the process by driving in the rest of the spikes. They worked with remarkable speed; Albert Andrew says he saw the outfit come out of the west in the early morning; by evening it was out of sight in the east.

In the fall of 1908 a work train from Saskatoon hauled out the first car of wheat. The wheat was loaded from the wagon to the car. No farmer had enough grain to fill a car so a group went together—Frank Imholtz, John Cline, Jack Bennett, Howard and Albert Andrew.

The town sites were decided on when the railway was surveyed. The towns along the Grand Trunk line were named in alphabetical order, and a name starting with "Z" had to be chosen for our village. Local authorities disagree on how the name "Zelma" came to be selected. Some say it was drawn out of thin air simply because it started with "Z"; others say that the railway officials were having difficulty thinking of a name starting with the required "Z", and Dr. Edgar suggested "Zelma" because that was the name of his sister-in-law (Mrs. Charlie Thode of Saskatoon). Whatever the explanation, the name was assigned to the site, and with the completion of the railway, the village of Zelma began to take form.

## BEGINNING AND EARLY GROWTH OF ZELMA

In 1908, Mr. Olson of Dundurn opened the first business place on the Zelma site—a lumber yard with Walter Hines in charge. During the summer, T. A. S. Campbell of Saskatoon built a general store and it started business that year with Bill Hogg as chief clerk. A. A. Mellish, who had worked for Mr. Campbell in his Saskatoon store, and Carson Mellish helped with the building of the store—the building still houses Zelma's only general store and is now owned by John Drobot. The first baby born in the village was the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Hogg, and they named her "Zelma". The village presented her with a lot on which Mr. Hogg built one of the first homes in the village (owned now by Mrs. C. W. Elderkin).

The first Christmas Concert was held in 1908 with John MacBride as Chairman. The program consisted mainly of musical selections and recitations, and artists included Mr. and Mrs. T. C. Johns, Mr. and Mrs. F. Imholtz, and Mrs. Midgeley.

1909 was the big year in the growth of Zelma. Walter Hines opened a hardware store, and there were now two lumber yards. One, owned by E. J. Meilicke of Dundurn, was operated by G. R. Duff, and the other, the Home Lumber Company, was run by Frank Britch. J. Jamieson built a hotel which included a poolroom and bar. The Atlas Grain Company put up an elevator, and installed Jim Hogg as the first operator. Two livery barns were opened; one, near the present hardware store, was run by Henry Masters and had living quarters, a dance hall and a barber shop above the stable. The other, located where John Mintkawitz' barn is now, was operated by Tom Moffatt. George Bates had been operating a blacksmith shop on his farm, and in 1909 he moved his shop into the village (now Cliff Holtorf's barn). V. P. Byam bought the general store and Post Office from T. A. S. Campbell, and John MacBride moved in from his homestead to run a furniture and implement store. Dr. MacKay of Allan, the nearest doctor after 1910, opened a drugstore in the present Saxton house with Willie Guyson in charge. The drugstore was in operation from about 1909 to 1911. 1909 was also the first year in which there was any crop to speak of in the district. Wheat averaged 30 bushels to the acre; considerable flax was grown too.

The rapid development of the village continued in 1910. A hall was built beside the hotel as a sort of annex, and Zelma's first big social event was the opening of the hall. It opened off the hotel billiard room, so when dances were held in the hall, the guests left their wraps and their babies on the pool tables. In 1910 too, Martin and Masters opened a small flour mill in the present J. F. Elderkin house. Walter McDougal started a bakery and confectionery store in the present Teacherage, and for a few years (until about 1915), Zelma shipped bread to Allan and Young. Other early places of business included butcher shops operated by Mr. McVee and Mr. Woolhead, a wood and coal business (Dave Bauer), and a general store run by Haugh and Shunk. A box car officiated as a station until the present building was erected in 1911. The first station agent was Dan Mathers.

According to records of the Department of Municipal Affairs, Regina, the Village of Zelma was organized on August 10, 1910, with the following area: the southeast quarter of section 21, township 33, range 28, west of the second meridian. Walter Hines, Honorary Secretary Treasurer of the Board of Trade, wrote to Regina, asking for the form of petition for the organization of the village. Mr. John Jamieson posted notices regarding the suggested organization in V. P. Byam's store, Walter Hine's hardware store, Henry Masters' flour and feed store, and Walter McDougal's Bakery. The nomination for candidates for election was held on August 23, 1910, in the Zelma Hall with John MacBride acting as returning officer. The council elected was composed of Thomas Capes, overseer; Walter Hines and Earl McDonald. A. H. Cline was appointed secretary-treasurer, and the first council meeting was held on September 6.

C. W. Elderkin was the real estate operator for the district. About 1906 he bought blocks of land, one of which included the area later selected as the village site. This was broken up and sold as town lots. The village plan made at that time shows three avenues running east and west, called First, Second and Third Avenues, and three streets north and south called Clayton, Main and Vernon Streets. Mr. Elderkin's remaining farm land around the village was badly broken by demands for roads leading into the village. He donated land for the cemetery. Some of the land Mr. Elderkin bought further from the town was sold to farmers as they proved up on their homesteads and wanted to enlarge their farms.



A view of the fire, 1930. Mrs. Scott in foreground

## MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT

The area surrounding Zelma was organized as Local Improvement District 17-Z-2 by Order-in-Council dated March 24, 1908. Four Councillors were elected: A. W. Hurst-Boram, Viscount; G. Elliott, Viscount; John MacBride, Curzon, and George King, Colonsay. P. F. Lane of Curzon was Secretary-Treasurer.

The Rural Municipality of Morris No. 312 was organized on Dec. 13, 1909. A vote taken previously by the residents of the area as to whether or not the area should be organized showed 50 in favour of organization and eight against. Denis Sullivan acted as returning officer for the first election. The area included in Morris Municipality is: "township 31 and portions south of lake in township 32, in ranges 25 and 26; townships 31, 32, and 33 in ranges 27 and 28; and fractional townships 31, 32, and 33 in range 29; all west of the second meridian." The first council was composed of the following members: Reeve, R. Cross, Young. Councillors: Div. No. 1, O. L. Holm, Watrous; Div. No. 2, J. Foster, Watrous; Div. No. 3, D. Allison, Young; Div. No. 4, G. M. Allingham, Young; Div. No. 5, F. M. Young, Young; Div. No. 6, J. MacBride, Zelma. Secretary-Treasurer, E. R. Ketcheson, Young.

Since that time, men from the Zelma district who have served as reeve include J. Cline, Sr., George Campbell; T. C. Johns, and the present reeve, C. C. Henriksen.

The province of Saskatchewan was formed in 1905, and, according to records in the Legislative Assembly Office, a provincial election was held December 13, 1905, at which 25 members were elected. The area surrounding Zelma was located in the Provincial Constituency of Batoche and at this election Mr. William Grant, Liberal, was elected. Gordon Smith relates that he and his brother were assigned the task of holding the first polling booth in the district, located about eight miles west of Manitou Lake. There were only two settlers in that part of the country, and they had not been there long enough to have a vote, so no votes were polled.

The Federal Constituencies were not established in this area until October 15, 1907, and representation was on the old territorial basis. This section was merely referred to as the Saskatchewan Constituency, and Mr. George McCraney, Liberal, of Roskern, was elected by acclamation in 1906. The

first Federal election was held October 26, 1908, and the Zelma area was contained in the Constituency of Saskatoon. Mr. McCraney was again the successful candidate in the election.

## BUSINESS LIFE 1912 TO PRESENT

The village of Zelma prospered in the years following 1912 as more settlers moved in and the hill section to the south of the town was opened up. The area served by the village extended six or seven miles north, five or six miles east and west, and about 20 miles south. Some of the original home steaders sold their land and moved out, and the farms gradually became larger and more prosperous. The first sale of land from one homesteader to another probably occurred in 1910 when M. D. Worden sold his quarter (SW 14-33-28 W2) to C. G. Henriksen for \$25 an acre. Main roads leading to the village were constructed, one of the first being the road south past the elevators.

The General Store and Post Office continued to be operated by V. P. Byam until he sold out to Harry Nemetz in 1919 and started farming. About 1924, George Middlekamp took over the business, and on his death, in 1929, it was sold to Tom Jones and Frank Kettles. In 1928 the Post Office was moved to a separate building, one which had been in turn an implement shop, a chop mill, a butcher shop and store, and Percy Browne moved in from his farm to become Postmaster, a position he has filled capably ever since. The general store was taken over again by V. P. Byam in 1933 and he sold it to Malcolm Grant of Young in 1939. The present storekeeper, John Drobot, managed the store for Mr. Grant until he bought the business in 1944.

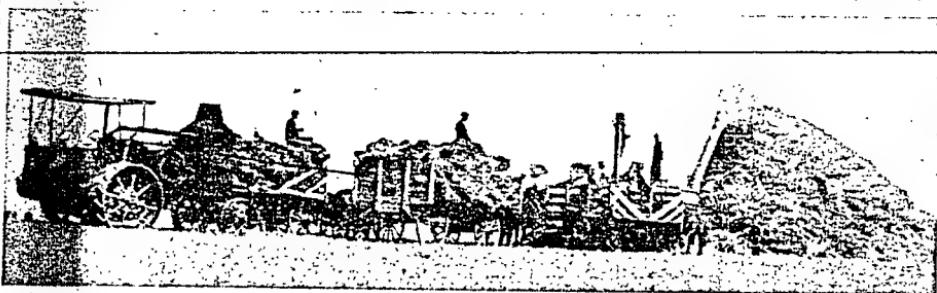
The second general store, operated first by Haughan and Shunk, and later by Diébert and Wald, was taken over by Thomas Capes and run as a restaurant and boarding house until the late 1920's. Stores were operated in the building in the 1930's by C. Mellish and H. Jones but finally it was left empty. About 1944 the building was sold and torn down.

The Hardware Store opened by Walter Hines was operated by Frank Kettles from 1912 to 1926 when it was taken over by Mr. Steinberg. This building was one destroyed in the fire of 1930. After Mr. Jamieson sold the hotel, it was owned or managed by various people through the years—Mr. LaBrash, Chris Schaan and Mr. Senger, Dave Bauer and C. Mellish. The annex was torn off at one stage, and for a time a store was operated in the building by Johnnie Holtorf and Arthur Burt. In the 1930's the building became vacant; about 1940 it was sold and torn down.

Mr. MacDougal's bakery closed down about 1913, and the building became a residence. Today it is owned by the School Board and used as a teacherage. Mr. Woolhead operated a butcher shop in Zelma from 1912 until his death in the 1930's, first in the present Elderkin house, then in the former McVee shop near the site of the present hall, later moving to a building between the teacherage and the Saxton house. This building was sold about 1943 and moved out of town.

The livery barn near the present lumber yard was owned in turn by Mr. Brackfield, T. Capes, and A. W. Joseph. It was eventually bought by C. V. Elderkin and moved to his farm. The second livery barn is still in operation today—owned by John Mintkawitz. Earlier owners were D. B. Chalk, Joe Bouch'cn and Thomas Campbell.

Mr. Meilicke's lumber yard was operated by George Duff until 1913 when it was sold to the A to Z Lumber Co. and operated by Mr. Klotz. In 1914 the yard was sold to the Monarch Lumber Co. A hardware section was added



Threshing outfit owned by Dave Bauer - about 1913

in 1929. Managers have included: G. Duff, MacAulay, Anderson, Klees, Thompson, Mac Robinson, Lorne Leslie, Ralph Lund, Leonard Budd, and the present agent Ken Petch.

The other lumber yard (Home Lumber Co.) was taken over by Mr. Olson of Dundurn in 1911 and managed by Earl McDonald until George Duff bought the building in 1913 after which it was used as a residence for a time. The first automobile in the district is said to have been bought by V. P. Byam in 1914, and others soon followed suit. By 1920 the village needed a garage, and George Duff opened one in the old Home Lumber building. In 1923 he went into partnership with V. P. Byam, and in 1925 the garage was moved to a new building on Main Street. It was distributing centre for the Ford Co. for a large area, extending from Viscount to Hanley. In 1928 the garage was sold to C. C. McGirr, and it was destroyed in the 1930 fire.

The old garage became a Blacksmith Shop operated by Frank Crudgington. A few years ago, it was completely rebuilt and is now an attractive residence. After the Ford garage burned, a garage was opened by John Willock and Johnnie Holtorf in a former blacksmith shop next to Mrs. Mintkowitz' present home. This garage was taken over in 1935 by A. D. Murray who had been in the district as a farmer and grain buyer since 1910. It was moved to a new building on Main Street in 1945.

Three more grain elevators have been built since the first one opened in 1909, and grain buyers have included Mr. Coulson, W. C. (Billy) Woods (now M.I.A. for Kinistino), George Duff, Ozzie House, A. D. Murray, H. Chalmers, and R. J. Thompson. Today the two Wheat Pool Elevators are operated by Ross Kelly, the National by O. Warren, and the Western by Joe Scherr.

The Zelma Rural Telephone Co. was organized in March, 1915, with G. R. Duff as president, C. W. Cline as Secretary-Treasurer, and J. Cline, G. A. Campbell, M. Shout, and J. Murray as Directors. Forty-two shareholders and subscribers were signed up to be given service. F. D. Kettles was appointed operator and lineman at a salary of \$38 a month, and the Telephone Office was located in Mr. Kettles' Hardware Store. By 1917, 43 more subscribers had been added. In 1929, the Board bought the Mellish house and it became the Telephone Office with Fritz Matthes providing very efficient service as operator and lineman. C. W. Cline has continued as Secretary-Treasurer, and later presidents have included H. Andrew, W. Easson, G. A. Campbell, and V. P. Byam. Today there are 89 subscribers.

From about 1916 to 1919, the Royal Bank of Canada operated a branch in Zelma two days a week in the present Elderkin house. Business did not warrant its continuation.

The Village Hall was built in 1926, but the interior was not completed



**One of the first Combines. Owned by Harry Simmons, 1928**

until 1948. Plans now are to add a kitchen and dressing rooms.

The fire of 1930 struck a severe blow at the business section of the village. The fire started in McGirr's garage and spread rapidly to the Hardware Store and the Poolroom. All three buildings were completely destroyed and they have never been rebuilt. Hard work on the part of the residents saved the lumber yard and houses in the eastern part of the village. After the fire, the village purchased a fire engine.

## **EDUCATION**

As soon as there were enough children in the district, something had to be done about educating them. Stonemount School No. 2070 was the first to open; it was finished in April, 1908, and opened immediately with George Midgeley as teacher. Golden Wheat School No. 2243 was built the same year and opened for the first term of 1909 with Miss R. Nickson as teacher. Fahrwell School No. 2309 opened in 1910 with Miss W. J. E. Brears in charge. In 1911, two schools to the south started operating—Limestone Hill No. 2754 and Oxford Plains No. 2799, with Hildegarde Scott and Lulu Parsons as the teachers.

Through these years, the children in the village had to attend one of the outlying schools, Stonemount or Golden Wheat. It was difficult to organize a School District in Zelma itself because all the land around the village was being farmed by bachelors who were averse to paying school taxes and kept voting the project down. Finally in 1912, Zelma School District No. 577 was organized. Classes were held in the church for the first three months until a building could be erected. The first teacher was Margaret Livingstone (now Mrs. W. C. Woods), and the first pupils included Lina and Sid Capes, Laura and Alfred Hines, Bernice and Leonard Prust, the Jamieson children and the Bailey children.

As more settlers moved into the area to the south, more schools were needed. Creekview School opened in 1916 with Sarah Cowan in charge, and Strawberry School (about 15 miles southwest) in 1917 with Ruth MacKenzie as teacher.

The one room frame school was used in Zelma until 1925, giving instruction in grades one to eight. By 1924 there were 40 pupils attending, and it was decided to build a two room school and provide instruction in high school work as well. The new brick school opened in August, 1925, with Mr. and Mrs. W. C. Adams in charge. The junior room (grades one to seven) had 32 pupils, the senior room (grades eight to 11) 19. Since that time, the work of

~~the senior room has been extended to include grade 12. The old school building was moved to Main Street and used as a poolroom and barber shop until destroyed by the fire in 1930.~~

In the last few years, the life of the school has been enriched by the purchase of two radios and a movie projector and the addition of a well equipped science laboratory.

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## RELIGION

Student ministers began coming out from Saskatoon to conduct religious services in the district as soon as there were enough settlers. The first service near Zelma was held in the dining tent of the railway camp in 1908. The service came to an abrupt end when the congregation left in a body to fight a prairie fire which came within six feet of the tents. The second service was held at the Edgar home. The student minister, George Marshall, brought a hand organ with him to provide music. Mr. Marshall returned to the district in 1932 as United Church minister in the Young-Zelma pastorate.

The first service in the village was held in McVee's butcher shop. Music was supplied by Albert Andrew and his violin. Later services were held in Martin and Masters' flour mill in the Martin's living quarters. They had an organ which was played first by Lena Martin and later by Hattie Boneham of the Radid Advance district. As the numbers attending increased, the services and the organ were moved to the loft of Masters' livery barn and held there until the loft was filled with hay for the winter. Some of the early services too were held in a box car.

In 1909 a group decided it was time to build a church. A loan of \$500 for the lumber was secured from the Presbyterian Church. Dr. Wilhelm hauled in stones for the foundation, and Mr. Kerneske, a brother of Mrs. Koopman, built the foundation, with Claus Bacchus, a strong Roman Catholic, donating his time to mix the mortar. A bee was organized to put up the church and in one day the building was almost closed in. The first service was held in the church in September, 1909, but since the interior was not completed, services had to be held elsewhere for the winter. The building was completed in 1910. A. A. and Carson Mellish shingled the roof.

The laying of the cornerstone was a memorable event with Mr. MacIn-tosh of St. Thomas Presbyterian Church, Saskatoon, officiating. The dedication service was conducted by Dr. Dix of St. Andrews College.

Mr. McDonald, a student minister, was first to conduct regular services in the church. He spent his holidays in the district and volunteered his time to help complete the building.

The trustees of the church building were Dr. Wilhelm, John MacBride, and J. Jamieson. T. C. Johns and Tom Moffatt were active in helping with organization and labor. The first Church Board included John MacBride as chairman and Dr. Wilhelm as secretary.

A Ladies' Aid was first organized in 1909; charter members included Mrs. T. C. Johns, Mrs. Will Johns, Mrs. Helmkae, Mrs. Wilhelm, Mrs. A. R. Rhodes, Hattie Boneham and Mrs. G. Campbell. It was discontinued in 1910 but reorganized in 1911 with Mrs. Capes as president, and the organization has played an invaluable part in church and community life ever since.

The Sunday School was organized in 1910 with Mrs. Byam as Superintendent. Later T. C. Johns took over the position. In 1926, C. W. Cline became Superintendent, and has continued to serve in that capacity to the present.

Early ministers included Mr. Davidson, W. G. Ross of Moose Jaw, L. R. MacRae, George Oliver, and David Robertson, who taught at Oxford Plains

School and conducted services on Sundays.

The first funeral in the church was that of Walter Knox, a brother of Mrs. Helmkae, buried Christmas Day, 1910. Mr. Knox was also first to be buried in Zelma Cemetery. The first death in the district had been that of Dr. Wilhelm's daughter who was first buried on the Wilhelm farm and later moved to the cemetery.

The church continued as a Presbyterian Mission Field for a number of years. However, some maintained that this was not quite fair since there were only two Presbyterians attending (Mr. Duff and Mrs. Byam), and, since union of the Protestant denominations was being discussed throughout the west, the church was reorganized in 1917 as "Zelma Union Church" to take in all Protestant denominations. When church union was accomplished throughout Canada in 1925, the Zelma church became a member of the United Church of Canada. No other church has been built in Zelma, and this has served as a tie in holding the people together. Like so many other small prairie towns, Zelma and Young have united to form the Young-Zelma pastorate served by one minister with the Manse located at Young.

The first wedding held in the church was that of Mr. and Mrs. C. Weston in 1919, and the congregation presented the couple with a Bible in honor of the occasion.

## SPORTS

The settlers in the Zelma area were sports-minded from the early days. A football association was formed first with Oscar Wingrove as chief organizer. In 1910, George Campbell, Earl McDonald and Jay Benson organized the first baseball team, and from then until 1940, Zelma was always able to produce a strong team for competition with neighboring towns. George Campbell was a very efficient coach for the team.

Tennis was another early sport. George Duff was instrumental in getting courts into operation on the present site of Duff's machine agency from 1910 to 1913. Later courts were built between the Station and the Capes building, and a Tennis Club flourished, but these courts fell into disuse in the 1930's.

There were curling enthusiasts among the pioneers too. In 1914, George Campbell, George Duff, and Billy Woods built a sheet of curling ice in the yard back of Byam's store. In November, 1915, a Curling Club was formed with the following executive: President, George Campbell; Vice-president, J. E. Cline; Secretary, H. Chalmers; Directors, George Duff, W. Easson, V. P. Byam. A strong Curling organization has continued to the present with most of the older members taking their turn at acting as president of the Club. Of the secretaries, A. D. Geddes served for 15 years, and C. W. Cline has served 18 years.

A two-sheet curling rink was constructed first and opened in December, 1915. This rink blew down in 1919 and was rebuilt the same year. Fees in 1915 were \$6.50 a member; in 1920 they were raised to \$10.00. In March, 1928, it was decided to build a combination skating and curling rink, and a Joint Stock Company was formed. The Building Committee was composed of J. E. Cline, G. Campbell, L. Prust, M. Shout, and C. G. Henriksen. 1,000 shares selling at \$5.00 each were issued first, and citizens of the community gave enthusiastic support to the project. Curling in the fine new rink started in January, 1929.

It is impossible to estimate the value the rink has been to the community in providing a recreation centre for the long winter months. Curling is not restricted to the older residents; it is a popular sport for all—men, women,



A Red Cross Meeting during World War I

and young people. The big event of each season is the annual bonspiel, lasting about a week. Later a one-day bonspiel is held for the school children of the district. Encouraging the young people to curl has resulted in strong curlers among the high school students. The Zelma High School rink has twice won the district playdowns in the provincial High School tournament, and this year (1949), the Zelma team reached the Northern Saskatchewan finals.

Until the combined skating and curling rink was built in 1929, an open air skating rink was constructed each year, usually on the corner where Murray's Garage now stands. George Campbell coached the hockey team for many years, building up a first-rate team. In the open winters of the 1930's, the team travelled many miles for games, from Imperial to Saskatoon.

The girls of the district have been active in sports through the years too, and the Girls' Softball Team has brought many honors to the district.

The big event of each summer for many years was the annual Sports Day, sponsored by the Community Sports Club. This included baseball and softball tournaments, races for the children, sometimes a horse-shoe tournament. In 1925 and 1926, one of the main attractions was horse-racing. Tom Campbell and W. Johns worked hard to get the roads in shape for the races, and horses were entered from Allan, Dundurn, Viscount, Young, and Zelma. During the 1930's, the baseball tournament was the big event of the Sports Day, and when it was impossible to get enough good teams to enter during World War II, the Sports Days were discontinued. The Homemakers' Club carried on during this time with an annual community picnic held on the school grounds. In the summer of 1948, the Community Sports Club was reorganized with Joe Scherr as president and Ken Petch as Secretary, and a successful Sports Day was held once more in July, 1948.

## FARMING OPERATIONS

There have been great changes in farming methods over the years. Perhaps the most noticeable change has been in harvesting. In the early days all of the threshing was done by large travelling outfits, the first coming in from

Dundurn, and run by Mr. Burke. An early local outfit was that run by Bill Bailey with Bill Helmke as separator man. The steam engines on these early outfits used straw as fuel, and one man, called a "straw monkey", had a full-time job hauling the straw from the stack to the engine. The average outfit comprised about 20 men and 26 horses and so needed an enormous supply of provisions and feed. At first the crews were fed by the farmers for whom they threshed—this meant a great deal of work and worry for the women since they were never sure beforehand exactly when the crew would arrive. Sometimes too, a crew would be held up at one farm for a couple of weeks through bad weather. Later the threshing outfits carried a cook car to feed the men; they charged extra but most farmers welcomed the change. The price charged was from 15c to 20c a bushel, and the outfit usually put through about 2,000 bushels a day.

Later outfits were organized within the district and the farmers' sons supplied much of the labor. As the farms became larger and the farmers more prosperous, individuals bought their own machines, and the travelling outfits gradually disappeared.

Harvesting then was a long and arduous process for any farmer with a fair-sized farm. First came the cutting by binder and the stooking; then after the grain had dried for about three weeks, the threshing. On some farms the work started early in August with a crew of 15 or more men; the threshing might not be completed until October or later if the men were held up by bad weather. Many of the workers came from Eastern Canada so could not be sent home to wait out a wet spell, and the farmer's wife in such cases had to board the men whether they were working or not.

The first combines were used by Dave Bauer and C. W. Elderkin about 1927, but combines did not come into general use until the early 1940's. Their adoption was speeded up by the difficulty in securing help during the war. Today almost all the harvesting in the district is done by combines; the work which formerly took a large crew of men weeks to finish can now be done by two or three men in a fraction of the time.

The change from horse power to tractors for farm work has been gradual. The day when every farmer had two or more complete outfits of horses has passed, and today the horse population of the district is small. The farmers are gradually concentrating more and more on straight grain farming and are raising less stock all the time.

Methods of cultivation have changed over the years too. The dry 1930's were hard years for the farmers, but they had at least one good result—farmers learned how to work the land to conserve what moisture there was. They realized more fully that farming involved study, planning, and hard work to get the most out of the land, and they began to experiment in different methods of cultivation and ways to prevent soil drifting. Some started to follow the practise of summerfallowing half their land each year and abandoned the old second crop system. When the rains of the early 1940's came, the farmers were ready for them, and their improved methods of cultivation, together with the moisture, gave the district the heaviest crop yields it had seen, especially in 1940, 1942, and 1944. Improved methods have shown good results too in years when the rainfall has been no more than adequate.

Considerable damage has been done to crops through the years by hail. Oldtimers still talk about the storms of 1916 as the worst experienced. On August 1, a hailstorm with stones the size of large marbles went through the district, destroying 90% of the crop. All the windows in Stonemount School were broken, so the men got busy and put in new windows that night. The next day, a storm with stones the size of hens' eggs followed the same route.



Zelma—1948

taking what little was left of the crop, and breaking all the Stonemount windows again.

## ZELMA'S PART IN WORLD WARS I AND II

When the First World War started in 1914, Zelma was still a young community. Twenty-eight men from the district volunteered for service, and of these, 10 lost their lives overseas. A Red Cross Society was organized in the village with the following executive: President, Mrs. V. P. Byam; Secretary, Mrs. T. Campbell; Treasurer, V. P. Byam; Directors, Mrs. Bentley, Sandy Geddes and Mrs. G. R. Duff. Numerous articles of clothing were made, and many parcels were sent overseas. Various means were used to raise money. The Society held masquerades, hard time dances and box socials. On one occasion, Mrs. Byam baked a fruit cake and everyone was charged 50¢ to guess its exact weight. The music for these social affairs were donated by local talent; Tom Campbell acted as auctioneer or floor manager, and Sandy Geddes was in charge of the door. When the boys came home from overseas, parties were held to welcome them back and gifts were presented to them. The people of Stonemount district gave watches to the boys from that part of the district.

When war broke out again in 1939, the young people began to leave the district until by 1945, 41 men and eight girls of the Zelma district were serving with the armed forces. Of this number, two gave their lives. Flt. Sgt. Frank Todd, R.C.A.F., was shot down near Jagersberg, Germany, in September, 1943, and Sgt. Wesley Cline, R.C.A.F., lost his life in a drowning accident at Bella Coola, B.C., in August, 1944.

The Red Cross Society was very active during the war years. The ladies sent in more than 500 articles of clothing, and the sum of \$3,432.00 was raised for the work of the Red Cross. The Society has continued to send in clothing and money since the war ended. The Homemakers' Club with the help of the community sent Christmas parcels each year to those in the armed services and also sent two parcels a month to those serving overseas, taking the names alphabetically. The Zelma Boy Scouts did their part by organizing salvage campaigns for scrap iron and paper.

When the news of victory in Europe was received, Thanksgiving services were held in the school and the church, and a committee was organized to arrange a welcome for the boys and girls as they returned home. Funds were collected from the citizens to buy gifts for the service personnel; those who

were sent overseas received chests of silver, while those who served at home were given pen and pencil sets or engraved silver compacts. "Welcome home" receptions were held, at which the gifts were presented in person to those who had already returned, and to relatives of those who were still serving.

Bronze plaques were placed in Zelma Church in memory of Flt. Sgt. Frank Todd and Sgt. Wesley Cline. In 1945 the village Council established a Memorial Park north of the Station, and an impressive dedication ceremony was held here in June, 1947, after which the gathering moved to the Village Hall for the unveiling of the Honor Roll.

## ROLLS OF HONOR

### WORLD WAR I — 1914-1918

W. Campbell	S. Dodd	A. D. Murray
H. Cline	C. Elderkin	W. Rayfuse
R. Cline	E. Harker	H. Selby
S. Collicutt	W. Harker	G. Smith
B. Davis	J. Hilton	C. Weston
C. Dodd	D. McVee	W. C. Woods

### IN MEMORIAM

J. Broughton	J. Hotham	L. W. Randall
H. Chalmers	F. Lama	A. Smith
Gilbert Duff	W. Miles	
J. Geddes	L. L. Randall	

### WORLD WAR II — 1939-1945

Stanley Bobiash	Nicholas Fischer	Alfred Saxton
Jean Byam	Roy Fischer	Harold Stanford
Louise Byam	Joseph Holtorf	Melvin Stanford
Arthur Capes	Donald Joseph	Stanley Steinsvoll
Dudley Chambers	William Joseph	Thomas Steinsvoll
David Cline	Alice Kelly	Kenneth Temple
Harold Cline	George Kelly	Olive Teneycke
Harvey Cline	Phyllis Kelly	Richard Todd
Helen Cline	Winnifred Kelly	John Usselman
Malcolm Cline	William Matsches	Albert Watt
Neil Cline	Bruno Mintkowitz	William Watt
Peter Cline	Bruce Murray	Norman Wingrove
Robert Cline	James Murray	Howard Yousie
George Duff	Spencer Murray	Lawrence Yousie
J. Mac Duff	Corbet Peek	Wesley Yousie
Marion Fischer	Anthony Pfleger	

### IN MEMORIAM

Wesley Cline	Frank Todd
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## ZELMA TODAY

Along with the rest of the prairies, Zelma and district suffered severely during the 1930's. Crops were poor; some years there was sufficient moisture to enable most farmers to grow some feed and seed, but in 1937, there was a



**Homemakers' Club at 25th Anniversary - June 1946**

complete crop failure. The extremely low price for wheat made it impossible for farmers to make ends meet, and the majority had to accept relief. The business life of the village underwent a corresponding setback; the disastrous fire of 1930, in which a good part of the business section was destroyed, was followed so closely by the depression years that the lost buildings were never replaced. Added to this, the new provincial highway from Saskatoon to Watrous, constructed in the early 1930's, turned north from Young to Colon-  
say, missing Zelma from its route, as did the Government power line a few years later.

However, a measure of prosperity has returned to the district following the better crops of the early 1940's and higher prices for farm products, and now Zelma is beginning to regain its position as the centre of a happy and prosperous community. The district was pleased to welcome back a number of young veterans, after the war who took up land on their own under the D.V.A. scheme. We have already mentioned the Community Sports Club formed in 1948, and the successful Sports Day held by the Club. In the spring of 1948, a committee canvassed the citizens for funds to purchase a movie projector and through the summer months, motion pictures of very good quality were shown twice a week in the Village Hall. Educational films of interest to both school children and adults were shown regularly too.

In the fall of 1948, the government power line was extended to Zelma. The village has been handicapped in many ways by the absence of power, and its arrival should add much to both business and social life. Roads into the village are gradually being improved, and this winter (1948 to 1949), the roads have been kept open through the use of a snow plow purchased by a group of farmers and business men, thus avoiding the customary months of isolation from the neighboring towns of Young and Allan, and making it possible to travel by car instead of depending completely on horses or the train.

Business men in Zelma today not previously mentioned include A. A. Mellish who has a fuel and general repair shop and Cliff Holtorf who runs a dray business. J. Dickens is the present C.N.R. Station agent. There is no restaurant in the village, but Mrs. R. Scott has provided a valuable service to the community through the years by serving meals and providing over-night accommodation for travellers in her home. Mrs. T. Campbell also serves meals.

In the past few years, several new homes have been built in Zelma; some of the older homes and places of business have been remodelled and painted so that the village has taken on a much brighter appearance.

Before we close this account, we should mention one of the community's most active organizations, the Homemakers' Club. The Club was formed in 1921, and its first executive was composed of Mrs. Byam as President, Mrs. Rhodes as Vice-president, Mrs. T. Campbell, Secretary-Treasurer, and Mrs. Fraleigh, Mrs. T. C. Johns, Mrs. R. Hedley, and Mrs. A. Cline as Directors. The Club has made many important contributions to the social and educational life of the district. Among many other activities, it has supervised and financed the care of the cemetery.

In the 40 years since it came into existence, the village of Zelma has had its ups and downs, but the residents of the village and district have never lost the spirit of co-operation and friendliness which characterized the early pioneers. It is this spirit which will continue to make Zelma a happy place in which to live. Zelma can now look forward with confidence to a future even brighter than its past.

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